

promotional events

Planning Your *Recovery Month* Event

Special events are one of the most visible ways communities celebrate **National Alcohol and Drug Addiction Recovery Month (Recovery Month)**. You can participate this year by planning an event in your local area to raise awareness about the treatment of and recovery from substance use disorders. By participating, you can help sustain the **Recovery Month** mission of encouraging all people to seek treatment for substance use disorders, celebrating individuals and families in long-term recovery, and acknowledging those working in the field who provide recovery services. You, along with the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration's (SAMHSA's) **Center for Substance Abuse Treatment (CSAT)**, within the **U.S. Department of Health and Human Services**, can help improve the lives of those suffering from addiction.

This year's theme, **"Join the Voices for Recovery: Now More Than Ever!"**, emphasizes how high levels of stress, especially endured by public safety officials, people in the workforce, older adults, and families, may contribute to or exacerbate alcohol and/or drug use, which can lead to a substance use disorder or relapse. **Recovery Month** is an essential element of one of SAMHSA's **10 Strategic Initiatives** that focuses on public awareness and support. The goal of this initiative is to increase the understanding of mental and substance use disorder prevention and treatment services to achieve the full potential of prevention, and help people recognize and seek assistance for these health conditions with the same urgency as any other health condition.

This document includes sample events to consider, possible goals for those events, and planning tips to organize a successful **Recovery Month** event. Through informative, educational, and celebratory events, individuals who need treatment may be encouraged to seek help and celebrate colleagues and friends who have achieved long-term recovery.

TOOLKIT TIP

Refer to the **"Guide to Interacting With the Media and Gaining Attention For Your Event"** piece in this toolkit for specific publicity tips.

Planning Your Event

Recovery Month events can encompass a variety of activities, such as festivals, recovery worship services, recovery walks and 5K races, town-hall meetings, and local rallies. In 2009, more than 1,000 **Recovery Month** events were held, including the **2nd Annual Washington Recovery Rally** in Washington, DC, featuring an afternoon of live jazz, recovery stories, exhibits, and refreshments. The first step of planning your event is to decide which type of event will be most successful in your community. For example, a 5K race may be popular in a large city where there are many participants and widespread media coverage, while a smaller town may benefit from a festival or a picnic in the town square. All events, big or small, aid in opening a dialogue about the detrimental effects that stress and alcohol and/or drug use can have on people across the country, as well as spread the positive message that treatment is effective and recovery is possible. Create your own event idea, tailor events from previous years listed on the **Recovery Month Web site**, or use the following examples to serve your community's needs. Raising public awareness and support to increase understanding of substance use and mental health disorders, and treatment and recovery services is one of SAMHSA's **10 Strategic Initiatives**. It was created to ensure individuals seek help with the same urgency as any other health conditions.

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Walk or run – Because exercise is a positive way to combat stress, this is an ideal way to link this year's theme of stress and alcohol and/or drug use to your event and attract the broader public. Encourage participants to walk or run in celebration of those in recovery.

Festival – This can be a free community event intended to raise awareness and can include music, a job fair, fitness classes, carnival rides, informational booths, raffle prizes, testimonies, and keynote speakers such as elected officials and people in your community in long-term recovery. During a previous **Recovery Month** campaign, one community held a fair providing free health care services for the entire family and handed out information about substance use prevention and treatment.

Prayer weekend – Churches and places of worship may be important to some in their personal treatment and recovery plan, and can provide hope or strength for individuals and their families who are in recovery. Also, some people find that attending religious services helps combat stress and provide a sense of peace.

TOOLKIT TIP

Refer to the “**Official Proclamations**” piece for information on how to involve government officials in your celebration.

Town-hall meeting – This informal public gathering allows all community members to voice their opinions, tell their stories, and hear responses directly from public figures or elected officials. These assemblies also can be held to educate public officials on current trends in the field and ways addiction affects their community. Encourage participating public officials to issue a **Recovery Month** proclamation to raise additional awareness. Refer to “**Maximizing Outreach Through Town Halls: A Planning Guide**” for step-by-step instructions for planning an effective town hall meeting.

Rally – Gathering people to generate enthusiasm on a specific topic will raise awareness of local addiction treatment and recovery issues. Additionally, rallies highlight the community's need for prevention and treatment resources. They also celebrate individuals who are in recovery and those who work in the field. Previous **Recovery Month** rallies have been hosted by celebrity emcees and held in conjunction with a 5K walk or run or a concert.

Webinar or other online event – Online events, such as a Webinar or Webcast featuring experts talking about treatment options, including e-therapy services, give participants the opportunity to confidentially interact “live” with professionals and their peers. Additionally, the audience can encompass people from the entire country. Remember to provide log-in information to all participants if necessary and provide them with additional **Recovery Month** resources after your event.

In addition to the above events, consider joining forces with other organizations to build on existing programs where you can hand out educational information, set up a display regarding addiction treatment and recovery, and connect individuals with needed resources available in your community.

TOOLKIT TIP

Refer to the “**Building Community Coalitions**” piece for more information on developing a partnership for your event.

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Goals of Your Event

While you plan your activities, keep in mind the objectives of your event. The foremost goal should be to educate the overall community about addiction and the diverse local and national treatment and recovery resources available. It is important to encourage colleagues, friends, and family members of those in need to provide them with the necessary resources to seek treatment. In addition, including individuals in long-term recovery and their families in your event provides positive examples of the possibility of recovery. Your event should:

- **Distinguish itself from similar events.** Create a unique theme, message, and design to differentiate your event from other activities in your area. If possible, schedule your event so it doesn't conflict with similar activities, or partner with other organizations to reach a broader audience and increase attendance and chances of media coverage. Also, check out event postings in your newspaper's community calendar or online at <http://www.charityhappenings.org>, a master calendar of nonprofit events, galas, and benefits. Remember to search for local conflicts on <http://www.recoverymonth.gov> and **post your event** on the **Recovery Month** Web site for additional publicity. Most importantly, be sure to brand your event as a **Recovery Month** event and place the **Recovery Month** logo on your materials and banners next to your organization's sponsor logos.

TOOLKIT TIP

Use the **Recovery Month** logo, which can be found in the "**Media Outreach**" section on the Web site, on all materials to create a common theme and brand. Remember to post your events on the **Recovery Month** Web site at <http://www.recoverymonth.gov>.

TOOLKIT TIP

Refer to the "**Press Materials for Your Recovery Month Event**" piece for information on tailoring a **Recovery Month** press release or media advisory for your event.

- **Garner press coverage.** Media coverage of your event can increase your organization's name recognition, ultimately helping to drive more people to seek help and become more knowledgeable about recovery.
- **Turn your volunteers and attendees into advocates for your cause.** Your event should be a starting point for creating a dialogue between the community and your organization. After your event, participants should be more informed about substance use disorders and can help spread your message

to friends and family. Follow up with them after the event to determine other activities they may undertake. If you partnered with other organizations, expand those relationships to network and educate others year-round about the effectiveness of treatment and the possibility of recovery.

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Planning a Successful Event

The following steps can aid in the planning process and help you organize a successful **Recovery Month** event:

- **Form a committee** that meets regularly and select a chairperson to serve as spokesperson and leader of the group. This group can work together to plan a **Recovery Month** event and should develop a master plan and timeline of deliverables.
- **Determine your budget** in the early stages of planning. Don't forget to think realistically and plan for any hidden costs that you may encounter. Include in this estimate fundraising opportunities such as sponsorship and ticket sales, as well as any expenses for permits and licenses, food and beverages, rentals for seating, music or entertainment, audio/visual equipment, invitations, and decorations.

The event location should be:

- Accessible
- Accommodating
- Centrally located

- **Consider logistics** and identify the venue, date, and size of your event based on available resources. After you decide what kind of event to hold, reserve your venue and secure any necessary permits so that you can move forward with the process. It is crucial to work with town or city officials, particularly if an event uses a public space. Permits, police detail, public safety needs, and insurance to cover any accidents are better addressed earlier rather than later. Additionally, your committee

has to decide how many volunteers will be needed on-site at the event and establish whether speakers and moderators will be needed.

- **Meet with potential partners**, including local businesses, key leaders, organizations, and media contacts who may consider sponsoring the event. These partners may choose to participate in your event, help raise community awareness, or support your cause financially.

TOOLKIT TIP

Refer to the "**Building Community Coalitions**" document of this toolkit, as well as the SAMHSA "**Fundraising Guide**" for additional information.

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- **Formulate a publicity plan** by deciding when and how to contact media to invite them to your event.
- **Prepare printed materials** for use prior to the event date, as well as materials that will be distributed on-site. These materials should highlight the current landscape of addiction, how stress can influence substance use disorders, as well as treatment and recovery resources. Materials may include flyers, brochures, banners, and fact sheets and should emphasize issues relevant to your community.

TOOLKIT TIP

Refer to the “**Guide for Interacting with the Media**” piece for more background information on how to publicize your event.

TOOLKIT TIP

You can use the “**Targeted Outreach**” section, which contains audience-specific facts, to help create any printed materials you need.

- **Hold a meeting** a week before the event to ensure that all loose ends are wrapped up. Review the responsibilities of committee members at the event and discuss any additional assignments. Answer any outstanding questions from the committee.
- **Set up booths or multimedia needs prior to your event** and ensure that all special equipment works properly. Remember that technical problems can occur, and all committee members and volunteers should know how to handle a problem should the situation arise. Additionally, provide speakers or moderators with an agenda or directions that will help them prepare for the event. Arrange an informal preparation session for the speakers or moderators an hour before your event.
- **After the event concludes, evaluate it** while the details and activities are fresh in your mind. You can meet with your committee to discuss whether the event fulfilled its objectives, decide what could be fine-tuned next time, or even begin planning for next year. Posting a “thank you” letter on your Web site or in the local paper citing those who were involved highlights the success of your event. Additionally, you can prepare a questionnaire for participants and use this information to alter your **Recovery Month** event next year. Send any materials that you used for promotional purposes to recoverymonth@samhsa.hhs.gov and remember to thank all of those who contributed to your successes!

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Share Your Event's Outcomes and Successes

Promote your event and share the success of your organization's **Recovery Month** event by:

- Posting your event materials, photos, or videos on the **Recovery Month** Web site, <http://www.recoverymonth.gov>, with your event listing to show the purpose and outcomes. Help spread the success of your event with others by sharing your outcomes through **Recovery Month** social media outlets such as the **Recovery Month** Facebook page, YouTube channel, and Twitter account. Refer to the "Online Voices" and "New Media Glossary" for ideas on how to use these online tools.
- Sharing your **Recovery Month** efforts by completing the "Customer Satisfaction Form."
- Sending a copy of your promotional materials electronically to recoverymonth@samhsa.hhs.gov or to:
Office of the Director, Consumer Affairs
SAMHSA's Center for Substance Abuse Treatment
1 Choke Cherry Road, Second Floor
Rockville, MD 20857

To view additional local and national events that are taking place regarding treatment and recovery, click the "Community Events" link on the **Recovery Month** Web site at <http://www.recoverymonth.gov>.

More Resources on Recovery Month and Substance Use Disorders

The following resources provide additional information about **Recovery Month** and substance use disorders:

- Substance use, treatment, and recovery information, and treatment referral is available by calling SAMHSA's 24-hour National Helpline, **1-800-662-HELP**, or 1-800-487-4889 (TDD), for free and confidential information in English and Spanish, or at SAMHSA's Web site, <http://www.samhsa.gov/treatment>.
- All materials from this toolkit and an extensive array of relevant information are available electronically at the **Recovery Month** Web site, <http://www.recoverymonth.gov>.

Inclusion of Web Sites and other event examples in this document and on the [Recovery Month](http://www.recoverymonth.gov) Web site does not constitute official endorsement by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services or the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration.

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